

Passenger Trans-Actions

Michigan Department of Transportation • UPTAN • Passenger Transportation Division • “We Move People”
 “Providing Michigan citizens with the best passenger transportation services through quality customer assistance”

Act 51 Transit Committee

The Act 51 Transit Committee has been meeting for the last several months to carry out the following three charges from the State Transportation Commission:

- Examine the current operating service area structure. Recommend an approach for expanding transit agencies’ service areas to a regional basis, including establishing a transitional plan for a new regional organizational structure.
- Develop a new transit operating formula recognizing and considering the variety of transit services (local, countywide, regional) currently provided statewide, as well as the variety of agencies providing transit services (local transit agencies, intercity bus companies, school bus service, taxis, jitneys and limousines).
- Develop a new transit operating formula based on efficiency and effectiveness that considers service area and type of service being provided.

The committee has taken testimony from numerous transit and community based groups. In addition, experts from other state departments of transportation were invited to discuss their state’s approach to providing state operating assistance funding and the use of performance measures to distribute those funds.

The committee has now completed taking formal testimony and is planning workshops to develop their recommendations on the three charges to the committee. They plan to complete this phase of the process and present their findings to the State Transportation Commission by the end of the year.

Meeting minutes and other information can be found on MDOT’s website (www.mdot.state.mi.us/act51/index.htm). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kip Grimes at 517/373-0470 or email grimesk@mdot.state.mi.us.

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Advisory Team Updates

Management Team

A last meeting was held November 18, 1999, in the MDOT Building. Major agenda items were the results of the Michigan Transit Center for Excellence Technology Study and updates on the public transit strategic plan and Act 51 Committee deliberations. Contact Wynell Brush for additional information (517/335-2594 or brushw@mdot.state.mi.us).

Training & Education Team

One of this team's big projects is developing a Statewide Transit Training Plan (STTP) (see page 5). The project's development group includes: Bob Rodgers and Sybil Ford, MTA, Flint; Tony Givhan, Kalamazoo Metro; Vicki Higgins, Big Rapids; Judy Tanis, Harbor Transit; Dawn Groeter, Holland; and Amy Edgar, MDOT (Team Leader).

The group met in August to decide which training subject areas they wanted included in the transit strategic planning survey to be administered this fall. The group developed an extensive list of essential training topics for transit personnel to evaluate in terms of their needs. This information will be used to customize the STTP for the Michigan transit community. Contact Amy Edgar for additional information at 517/373-2261 or edgara@mdot.state.mi.us.

Transit Vehicle & Equipment Team

The last advisory team meeting was held at the Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority on September 1, 1999. The agenda included a review and recommendation on several service development projects and a review of the draft medium duty bus specification.

The team supported the proposed study entitled, "Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic (FRP) Composite Bus Body Structure Integrity Analysis," which would help determine the structural strength and safety of composite bus bodies. A similar project was conducted on a steel frame bus structure.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 1, 1999, at Livingston Essential Transportation in Howell. Contact Al Johnson for additional information at 517/335-2549 or johnsonal@mdot.state.mi.us.

Enhancement Program

Enhancement application packets were mailed from the department the week of September 7. If your copy did not arrive or you would like to apply via the Internet, please visit the Enhancement Program web site: <http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/programs/enhance/enhance.htm>.



The program is divided into the following project categories:

Non-motorized Facilities: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities, preservation of abandoned railway corridors, and safety and educational activities.

Transportation Aesthetics: Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic sites, scenic highway programs, landscaping and beautification.

Water Quality and Wildlife Mortality: Reduce water pollution due to highway runoff and efforts to reduce animal mortality and maintain wildlife habitat connectivity across transportation facilities.

Historic Preservation: Acquisition of historic sites, historic highway programs, historic preservation, rehabilitation of historic structures, archaeological planning and research, and establishment of transportation museums.

Public transit agencies are eligible for the program and may submit applications on behalf of Non-Act 51 groups. A minimum of 20 percent state or local match is required. Deadline date: Monday, December 6, 1999, for 2001 funding.

Contact Linda Tuttle for additional information at 517-373-7645 or tuttlel@mdot.state.mi.us.



Section 5311 Operating Assistance

We heard you! And in response to your needs, the Passenger Transportation Division (PTD) submitted the FY2000 Section 5311 Operating Assistance Grant totaling \$5.3 million to the Federal Transit Administration on October 8, 1999. Payments are contingent on FTA's review and approval of the grant, but funds should reach transit agencies earlier than ever.

With guaranteed funding of approximately \$6.2 million available for operating assistance or capital purchases, we are able to maintain the 10.95 percent operating assistance reimbursement rate and use the balance of the appropriation for nonurban capital needs.

Vehicle & Equipment Disposal

Beginning November 1, 1999, all vehicles and equipment (excluding land and buildings), which have met their useful life, must be disposed of locally. Transit agencies will no longer have the option to return vehicles and equipment to MDOT for disposal. In addition, proceeds from the sale of vehicles and equipment can be retained locally by the transit agency and used to support the provision of public transportation. This includes all vehicles and equipment that were originally purchased under a 100% state funded grant, a state administered federal grant, or the state portion of a non-state administered federal grant (the federal portion is subject to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) disposal procedures).

All future capital contracts will include new vehicle and equipment disposal language. In addition, you should have received a letter which included the procedure for local disposal of vehicles and equipment and an attachment which amended all existing contracts to allow for this new disposal procedure.

Transit agencies may still choose to include their vehicle(s) in a Michigan Department of Management and Budget (DMB) auction. Please call DMB at 517/335-8444 to make arrangements.

Please contact Al Johnson for additional information at 517/335-2549 or johnsonal@mdot.state.mi.us.

1999 Drug/Alcohol Training

PTD sponsored several drug/alcohol training sessions across the state November 16-19, 1999. Transit agency drug and alcohol program administrators, as well as supervisors of safety sensitive employees, were invited to attend one of these sessions to review the USDOT drug/alcohol regulations.

Jerry Stewart, J.D., Vice President and General Counsel for National Diagnostics, Inc. (NDI), facilitated the sessions. Mr. Stewart has extensive experience in developing and administering drug and alcohol testing programs.

Sessions were held in Lansing, Mt. Pleasant, and Grayling. For additional information, contact Amy Edgar at 517/373-2261 or edgara@mdot.state.mi.us.

RTAP Grant Request Changes

Beginning October 1, 1999, the RTAP grant request process got a little easier. Eligible agencies can now submit a RTAP request for \$100 to \$2,499.99 using the voucher method; contracts are only required for requests over \$2,500 up to the agency cap (\$4,000 for FY2000). Requests are still required to be submitted 15 days prior to the training date for the voucher method and 90 days prior to the training date for contracts. This should make processing RTAP grants faster with less paperwork for everyone.

Also, some travel rates changed as of October 1, 1999, for RTAP reimbursements. A new RTAP Schedule for Travel Rates will be mailed to you with your approved RTAP Grant Request. If you would like additional information, contact Jill Adams at 517/373-2051 or adamsji@mdot.state.mi.us.



Commuter Choice Program

What is Commuter Choice? It's fringe benefits that employers can offer employees to encourage commuting to work by methods other than driving alone. The employer purchases these benefits and offers them to employees either free or at an employer-subsidized price. Under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules, they are also referred to as "qualified transportation fringes" and include transit and vanpool passes or vouchers and parking spaces.

Commuter Choice programs make it easier and more economical for people to get to work. They reduce congestion, improve air quality, conserve energy, and have been shown to increase employee satisfaction and improve employee retention rates. Commuter Choice programs offer win-win benefits for the employer and employees -- they do not necessarily increase employer costs and they are popular with employees.

For more information on commuter choice programs, contact Angie Payne at (517) 335-2553 or paynea@mdot.state.mi.us.

Welcome New PTD Employee

PTD welcomes a new employee to the Regulatory Unit in the Technical and Regulatory Section. Steven Kost joins the unit as a Regulatory Affairs Specialist and his primary responsibility will be motor bus credentialing.

Steve most recently worked in recruitment at the Motor Carrier Division of the Michigan State Police. Previous to that, he was assigned to the Brighton Post as a Road Patrol/Scale Officer for ten years. Steven also held other state government positions related to the computer field at the former Michigan Employment Security Commission and the State Police. He has a degree in criminal justice from Michigan State University.

You can contact Steve at 517/335-2583 or kostst@mdot.state.mi.us. Welcome, Steve.

Project Zero

The Transportation Services Section (TSS) was busy during the month of October attending Project Zero kick-offs for the 36 newly designated sites for FY 2000. With these additions, there are now 49 counties participating in this program, including four of the five most populous - Wayne, Oakland, Kent, and Genesee. With its goal to reduce to zero the number of targeted families without earned income, Project Zero is an integral part of Michigan's welfare reform effort.

Project Zero has proven to be successful in small, rural, and large-metropolitan counties. Two reasons for the success of this program are the efforts of the partners at the state level, which include the Family Independence Agency (FIA), the Michigan Departments of Career Development (MDCD), and Transportation (MDOT), as well as the collaboration at the local level.

Plans are currently being developed for the new Project Zero sites to identify services that are needed to help FIA customers overcome barriers to employment and self sufficiency. TSS staff will serve as reviewers of the plans, in conjunction with representatives from FIA and MDCD. Efforts to obtain needed resources to fulfill the plan requirements will be made. During the plan implementation, TSS staff will monitor the transportation services provided. This effort should contribute to the success of Project Zero.

Michigan Department of Transportation

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Urban and Public Transportation

Philip F. Kazmierski, Deputy Director

Passenger Transportation Division

Kip Grimes, Administrator

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Consolidated Pupil and Public Transportation Study

Drs. Lawrence Sych and Richard Senter from Central Michigan University's (CMU), Transportation Studies Center, along with Michael G. Mobey, recently completed a study on the coordination and consolidation of public and pupil transportation. Based on the results of a survey by Ferris State University (FSU), CMU's study involved in-depth case studies to illustrate best practices of agencies already transporting pupils. A handbook was developed to guide those interested in pursuing a collaborative effort.

The study is divided into three parts:

- Cases of Consolidated Pupil/Public Transportation in Michigan
- Lessons from Consolidated Pupil/Public Transportation in Michigan (Executive Summary, How To Implement, Lessons)
- Report on Results of Survey of Pupil/Public Transportation Considerations (includes an Executive Summary).

The reports are available on the PTD Web Page (<http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/uptran/PTD/index.htm>) or can be requested from Linda Tuttle at 517/373-7645 or tuttlel@mdot.state.mi.us.

Strategic Plan Update

The University of Michigan (U of M) through the Michigan Transit Center for Excellence (MTCE) will help update the Michigan Transit Strategic Plan. A Strategic Plan Oversight Team has been established and includes members from PTD, the Bureau of Transportation Planning, transit agencies, specialized services providers, stakeholders, and other state agencies.

The oversight team, in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Advisory Council (SPAC), is monitoring the activities of U of M to ensure that important transit issues are being included in the plan. These two teams have also been utilized to formulate action steps necessary to move transit forward over the next 20 years.

In addition to the expertise provided by the SPAC and the oversight team, eleven focus group sessions were held across the state for input from interested parties into the strategic planning process. From this input, a survey will be developed and distributed later this fall to transit agencies, specialized services providers, state agencies, as well as other stakeholders, to obtain additional data for the strategic plan revision. Major issue areas that have been identified to date include: communication, funding, cooperation/coordination, legislative concerns, and general program issues.

For additional information regarding the Transit Strategic Plan Update Project, please contact Linda Tuttle at 517/373-7645 or tuttlel@mdot.state.mi.us.

Dates To Remember



APTA General Manager's Seminar
January 29-February 2, 2000
Santa Monica, CA, Loews

APTA Legislative Conference
March 12-15, 2000
Washington, DC, JW Marriott

APTA Commuter Rail Conference
April 9-12, 2000
Long Island, NY, Hilton/Marriott

APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference
May 7-11, 2000
Houston, TX, Westin Galleria

CTAA Expo 2000 Annual Conference
June 3-9, 2000
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Passenger Trans-Actions is a quarterly news bulletin produced by the Michigan Department of Transportation, Passenger Transportation Division for the public transit providers in Michigan. Suggestions or comments may be sent to Jill Adams, UPTRAN/Passenger Transportation Division, P.O. Box 30050, Lansing, Michigan 48909 (telephone (517/373-2051 or adamsji@mdot.state.mi.us). Alternative formats such as large print, braille, or audio-tape are available upon request by calling Rose Ann Ward (517/335-2598 or wardr@mdot.state.mi.us). Number of copies: 500; total cost: \$101.85; cost per copy: \$0.20.

Around the State

Blue Water Transportation

Both General Manager Jim Wilson and Blue Water Area Transportation were recently honored with Community Service Awards from the St. Clair Community Mental Health (CMH). In giving the awards, CMH stated that Jim and Blue Water Transportation provide more than bus service, they provide independence and a sense of community for hundreds of individuals living within St. Clair County. MDOT extends its congratulations to Jim and the entire staff of Blue Water Transportation for these well-deserved awards.



Sanilac Transportation

The following was submitted by Marjorie Zachwieja of Sanilac Transportation Corporation.

“On Thursday, August 19, 1999, driver Ray Godbey of Sanilac Transportation Corporation was waiting curbside for a community mental health client to board. However, the client had decided not to get on the bus that day and stubbornly would not leave the porch. Ray then witnessed the caretakers physically abusing the client. Ultimately, the client did board the bus.

Ray immediately got the name, address, and telephone number of a witness and reported the incident to Sanilac Transportation’s Operations Manager. Within 30 minutes of the incident, a meeting took place with the Community Mental Health Director of Developmentally Disabled Education, a Recipient Rights Officer, the witness, and Ray. The client was permanently removed from the home that day.

While many drivers would choose not to get involved in this type of situation, Ray did not hesitate a minute and immediately did what was right. But none of us who know Ray were a bit surprised at his reaction. Ray has a reputation as a “sweetheart” of a guy. We all think Ray is very special, but because he is so quiet and unassuming, no one realizes how special he really is.”

Thanks, Marjorie, for letting everyone know about Ray and his dedication to his clients.

CATA and MSU Partnership

In August, Lansing’s Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) began Michigan State University (MSU) campus bus service and held a service “Launch” ceremony (see pictures below). This first-time regional partnership will provide new and expanded transportation services to the MSU community, as well as to the surrounding areas, while reducing traffic and parking congestion problems in and around the MSU campus.

Fourteen CATA routes now serve the MSU campus, some circulate within campus boundaries and others bring customers to and from campus from East Lansing, Okemos, Haslett, and southeast Lansing. Congratulations to CATA for this ambitious undertaking.



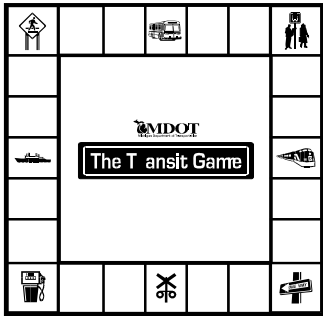
CATA Director Sandy Draggoo and MSU President Peter McPherson at the CATA/MSU “Launch” ceremony.

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Sandy Draggoo and granddaughter Jordyn Lewis enjoy cake prepared by the MSU Bakery for the “Launch” ceremony.



PTD Annual Meeting

Over 200 folks participated in the 1999 meeting held October 25-27 representing transit agencies, intercity carriers, MPOs,

vendors, speakers, presenters, MDOT staff, and guests including special Russian guest Vladimir Potholski.

The general session featured Kip Grimes as the Game Maestro. Several speakers incorporated game themes into their talks -- Don Gismondi from FTA compared his work to Hop Scotch with the pebble representing the money. Once you successfully pick up the pebble, you have to turn around and play to the end before cashing it in. Debbie Marshall, federal legislative liaison in Washington, created Bus vs. Backhoe to demonstrate the difference between bus transit and highways competing for the same pot of federal money.

Program updates included Public Transportation Management System (PTMS) by Kip Grimes; High Speed Rail by Bob Kuehne from MDOT's Planning Bureau; Project Zero by Kim Johnson; and Ride Brokering by Tom Sinn from TMI of Berrien County. Our keynote speaker was Peter Schauer and his talk was *Refocusing Transit*. A well attended vendors' reception was an uplifting way to end the day.



Linda Tuttle, Peter Schauer, and Angie Payne

Participants were challenged to choose from the many concurrent breakout sessions. Sessions included: Regulations, Accounting, GIS demo, How to Refocus Transit for the 21st Century: Making Yourself Y2K Compliant by Peter Schauer; Transit Image and Visibility



Kip Grimes, Tom Mauser, and Phil Kazmierski.

by Tom Mauser; Effective Partnering/Team Building by Debbie Huntley and Pat Smith; Legislation and Funding with Don Gismondi, Kip Grimes, and Kim Johnson. The

Michigan Transit Center for Excellence (MTCE) featured five completed projects, and Lynn Lafler and Cherie Giller facilitated two Transit Agency Open Forums.



A prelunch program update included Ridesharing by Angie Payne and Michigan Transit Strategic Plan by Dr. Thomas Reed of the University of Michigan.

Our final speaker was Phil Dr. William Taylor, Michigan State University, presenting MTCE study results. He distributed a draft of the goals established to date. He spoke of "fun"ding and the collaborative effort that produced an agenda taken to the congressional delegation.

The Tuesday dinner was enhanced by shuttle service from Bay Area Transportation Authority (thanks, BATA). Game tokens brought out a competitive nature that was fun to watch.

Thank you for returning evaluation forms. The conference planning team will incorporate the suggestions to the best of their ability and they also appreciate the topics suggested and the comments. As always, you may contact Linda Tuttle at 517 373-7645 or e-mail tuttlel@mdot.state.mi.us regarding the Annual Meeting.



Special thanks to the Annual Meeting Planning Team: front row: Norma Guevara, Amy Banninga, Lynn Lafler, Kathy Urda, Linda Tuttle (team leader), David Sucha; back row: Vicki Higgins, Cherie Giller, Angie Payne, Sandy Lovell, Jean Ruestman, and Tom Jackson.

Life in the Fast Lane - Surviving the 21st Century

On a daily basis we are deluged with information on the coming millennium. Everything from the end of the world to stocking up on batteries in case the lights go out January 1, 2000. At the recent PTD Annual Meeting, the theme was "The Transit Game" and we discussed many subjects including the transit game for the 21st Century. What is in store for public transit in the new millennium?

Let's look back for a moment. In the first half of the 20th Century the automobile, radio, airplane, gas bus, freeways, television, and computers were invented and introduced to our everyday lives. In the second half of the century personal computers, satellites, cell phones, and the world wide web have become almost as common as the car. The 20th Century is truly the great mobility and communication age. Certainly the expectation that most anything can be accomplished with speed and efficiency has become the accepted norm of daily life.

Now take a look at what's coming. The Baby Boomers are turning 50 at the rate of one every 7 seconds, life expectancy is now 76 and by 2025, 20% of Michigan's population will be 65 or older. New technology improvements will continue to come along at a fast pace and speed up information processing even more. Suburban sprawl will continue but will be in competition with cities attracting folks back in town who are tired of the long commute. We will not run out of petroleum, but other political and socio/economic factors will drive the price of gas up to European levels.

Working at home will become more and more popular for certain sectors of the economy, but the need to move goods and people globally quickly and efficiently will become more and more important to the world economy. Family units will continue to be small with a large number of single parent households and most parents will be working. Many of these families will have low to moderate incomes and will need transportation alternatives to the automobile.

What does this mean for public transit in the coming century? Public transit provides mobility which is a quality of life need for everyone. We are creatures of movement, communication, and interaction with our fellow human beings. Public transit will continue to meet the need to be mobile. In fact, based on the factors mentioned above, public transit should experience significant ridership increases in the coming years. However, to meet this challenge the public transit community (transit agencies, associations, MDOT, private providers, and other stakeholders) must:

- ▶ Be flexible to meet customer needs especially the needs of transit dependent customers;
- ▶ Be fully integrated with other modes and other transit services;
- ▶ Think of transit as a regional and statewide network;
- ▶ Break down artificial barriers (county lines, funding restrictions, etc.) which limit mobility;
- ▶ Get involved in land use planning so transit is considered right along with roads;
- ▶ Make effective use of new technology to improve customer service;
- ▶ Provide a safe environment for the customer in the bus and at bus stops;
- ▶ Coordinate/consolidate multiple funding sources and multiple service delivery systems;
- ▶ Create a statewide mission and vision for the future.

In many respects the future is with us now. In this fiscal year, Act 51 sunsets and federal capital discretionary authorizations may be determined for the remainder of TEA-21. The total transit community must partner to insure public transit's mobility role in the 21st Century. If you have any questions, please contact Kip Grimes at 517/373-0470 or e-mail grimesk@mdot.state.mi.us.



Speaking of Partnering

There are two recent examples of the importance of the collective transit community working together for the good of the whole. The first was the unified effort to obtain additional FY2000 federal section 5309 capital discretionary funds. You will recall that a package of projects was developed jointly by the department and transit agencies. The proposed package was ultimately supported by the Governor's office and the Michigan delegation and resulted in an earmark of \$9.1 million in addition to the \$13.4 million guaranteed for Michigan in TEA-21.

The second positive partnership experience was a recent FTA state management review of the Section 5310-Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program and the Section 5311-Nonurban Area Formula Program. These two programs provide funding to 138 transit agencies statewide. Division staff must work closely with all of the participating agencies to insure that the federal program regulations are met and the funds are spent according to the approved federal grants. In his Letter of Findings, Region V FTA Administrator Joel Ettinger states, "The final report shows the MiDOT is fully compliant with all areas examined during the review. For this, MiDOT is to be commended. Seldom in our experience does a grantee achieve a perfect review." Congratulations are in order for all of the transit agencies and division staff participating in these important federal programs.

These two examples prove the importance of partnering to reach our common goals.

**Happy Holidays
from the
Passenger Transportation
Division**

Lake Erie Transit Christmas Tours

Lake Erie Transit is planning its second annual "Lights Before Christmas" tours scheduled for December 13-17. The tours were started last year when Driver Sue Chapman asked if the agency could take a few senior and handicapped clients who were confined to nursing home facilities to view Christmas lights at no charge. Sue felt that Christmas had become too commercialized and wanted to give to the community in some way.

With the approval of General Manager Mark Jagodzinski, employees Gerry Bruck and Tony Webb began planning the "Lights Before Christmas" tours. Other employees volunteered their time to take the seniors on the tours. The seniors were so excited to see the lights; it was like watching children that were seeing Christmas lights for the first time. This is the first time some of them had seen Christmas lights at night in years. They sang Christmas songs and Santa Claus even met the tours along the way and gave presents to all the seniors (courtesy of Norman Towers). Lake Erie Transit had 440 senior and handicapped clients join them on the tours last year.

A toast of holiday cheer to all employees of Lake Erie Transit who volunteered a few hours of their time to make the holidays special for all the participants. The employees included: Sue Chapman, Terry Gerweck, Kathi Stewart, Chris Herzig, Orval Herzig, Denise Drodts, Mark McGowan, Judy Keck, Brian Brewster, Garland Coleman, Larry Saliba, Doug Vinci, Duane Little, and Marlene Kember.



